

Amendments to the claims: Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A fingertip tactile sense input device comprising:  
an input plate with a plurality of projections, each projection having a front end for  
receiving pressure contact by a human fingertip, and each projection having a back  
end;  
the projections arranged in a surface area ~~with a generally egg-shaped outline~~ defined by the  
range of motion on a surface by a human fingertip with the wrist fixed; ~~and that is~~  
~~equally usable with a right or left hand;~~  
an electrical input circuit on the back end of each projection;  
a pressure sensitive variable resistor in each input circuit;  
a selection circuit electrically connected to the input circuits that identifies which one of the  
projections is being pressed the hardest, including when two or more of the projections  
are pressed simultaneously; and  
input control means, electrically connected to the selection circuit, that encodes a unique  
electronic representation of each projection identified by the selection circuit. and  
~~input control means that encodes a given input signal when a respective one of the~~  
~~projections is pressed by a moving fingertip.~~
2. (amended) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim 1, wherein at least twelve  
projections are provided ~~within the egg-shaped outline~~, corresponding to digits 0 - 9 and  
characters "\*" and "#".
3. (original) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim 2, wherein the at least twelve  
projections are arrayed in rows and columns, with lateral spacing of the columns in a range  
of 4.5mm to 8.0mm, and vertical spacing of the rows in the range of 4.0mm to 7.0mm.
4. (amended) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim 1, wherein the ~~egg-shaped~~  
~~outline~~ surface area has a height of 24mm to 28mm and a width of 22mm to 28mm.
5. (cancelled)

6. (currently amended) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim ~~5~~, 1, wherein the input plate is flexible, and the projections are integrally molded with the input ~~plate~~; plate.
7. (currently amended) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim ~~5~~, 1, wherein a given one of the projections is smaller than the other projections to indicate a home position to the tactile sense.
8. (original) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim 7, further comprising a menu navigation key centered above the projections and two additional function keys equidistant on the left and right from the home position.
9. (amended) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim ~~5~~, 1, further comprising:
  - a handheld portable electronic device with a front surface and a back surface;
  - a display screen on the front surface of the portable handheld electronic device;
  - the input plate mounted in the back surface of the portable handheld electronic device;
  - a control section in the handheld portable electronic device that is electrically connected to
    - the input control means and to the display screen;
  - the control section causing the screen to display a visual representation of each projection when it is identified by the selection circuit;
  - the visual representation of the identified projection being displayed in a position on the screen corresponding to the location of the identified projection relative to the other projections.
10. (currently amended) A tactile sense input device comprising:
  - an array of projections protruding from a surface, each projection having a rounded front end for receiving pressure contact from a moving human fingertip, and each projection having a known spatial position relative to the other projections in the array;

the projections arranged in an area defined by the range of motion on a surface by a human fingertip with the wrist ~~fixed and fixed~~, the array of projections equally usable with a right or left hand without rotation or reversal of the array of projections;

an electrical input circuit behind each respective projection;

variable resistance means for producing an electric current in each input circuit in proportion to pressure by a human fingertip on the respective projection;

a selection circuit that compares electrical current strengths among the input circuits, and identifies the input circuit with the strongest current, including when two or more of the projections are pressed simultaneously;

an input controller, electrically connected to the selection circuit, that encodes a digital representation for each input circuit identified by the selection ~~circuit~~, circuit;

an input/output control section electrically connected to the input controller and to a display screen that causes the screen to display a visual representation of each unique digital representation when it is encoded by the input controller;

each unique visual representation displayed in a position on the screen corresponding to the spatial position of the respective projection that caused it.

11. (original) The tactile sense input device of claim 10, wherein the array of projections limited to an area with a lateral dimension of about 28mm and a vertical dimension of about 30mm.
12. (currently amended) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim 10, wherein the input plate is flexible, and the projections are integrally molded with the input ~~plate~~; plate.
13. (original) The tactile sense input device of claim 10, further comprising a navigation key centered above the projections and a left and right function key.
14. (currently amended) The tactile sense input device of claim 10, further comprising:  
a personal digital assistant having an outer case with front and back surfaces;  
wherein the a display screen is mounted on the front surface of the outer ~~case~~; case, and

the plurality of projections ~~being~~ is mounted on the back surface of the outer ~~case;~~ case.  
an input/output control section electrically connected to the input controller and to the  
display screen that causes the screen to display a visual representation of each unique  
digital representation when it is encoded by the input controller;  
each unique visual representation displayed in a position on the screen corresponding to the  
spatial position of the respective projection that caused it.

15. (original) The tactile sense input device of claim 14, wherein the projections protrude through individual holes in the back surface of the outer case of the personal digital assistant.
16. (original) The tactile sense input device of claim 14, wherein a home position for a fingertip is indicated by a surface feature on the back surface of the outer case of the personal digital assistance.
17. (new) A fingertip tactile sense input device comprising:
  - a handheld portable electronic device with a front surface, a back surface, and first and second side surfaces;
  - a display screen on the front surface of the portable handheld electronic device;
  - an input plate mounted on the back surface of the handheld portable electronic device, the input plate comprising a plurality of projections, each projection comprising a distal end and a proximal end;
  - the projections arranged within an area of the input plate defined by the range of motion of the tip of the index finger of a human hand gripping the portable electronic device between the thumb of the hand on the first side surface thereof and at least one other finger of the hand on the second side surface thereof, and wherein the projections are equally usable by the index finger of a right or left hand without rotation or reversal of the input plate;
  - an electrical input circuit on the proximal end of each projection;
  - a pressure sensitive variable resistor in each input circuit;

a selection circuit electrically connected to the input circuits that identifies which one of the projections is being pressed the hardest, including when two or more of the projections are pressed simultaneously; and  
an input controller, electrically connected to the selection circuit, that encodes an electronic representation of each projection identified by the selection circuit.

**18.** (new) The fingertip tactile sense input device of claim 17 further comprising:  
an input/output control section, electrically connected to the input controller and to the display screen, that causes the screen to display a visual representation of each electronic representation in a position on the screen corresponding to the relative spatial position of the respective projection in the plurality of projections.